Keep program participation simple for your contractors

Successful residential energy efficiency programs strive to set requirements for high-quality home energy upgrades and streamline processes to facilitate contractor participation. Balancing these two essential elements can minimize the burden on contractors and help the program maintain a consistent pool of qualified professionals. Satisfied contractors are a key to satisfied customers and successful programs.

To reduce contractors' reporting costs and enable timely and complete reporting, programs have streamlined contractor reporting forms while still collecting the necessary information for program operations. Most programs also avoid making contractors meet locally-specific certification requirements, instead requiring certification from nationally recognized programs. Many have found that soliciting ongoing feedback from contractors and communicating early about new offerings and potential changes allows for contractors to have a voice in the program's design, and therefore a greater investment in its outcome. For more on working effectively with contractors, see the **Contractor Engagement and Workforce Development handbooks** [1].

- **Long Island Green Homes** [2] began consulting with contractors during program design and continued to do so as the program launched. The program made it a priority to engage with a core group of trusted contractors when rolling out program changes, asking them about their needs, concerns, and current state of business. In this way, the program ensured that program offerings were adding value for the home performance industry and that program requirements were manageable for contractors.

- **NeighborWorks of Western Vermont** [3] focused on listening to the needs, wants, and issues of contractors, so the program could help them serve customers most effectively. The NeighborWorks program held individual monthly meetings with each contractor to review client status, as well as bi-weekly group contractor meetings to review program issues, alert contractors to any changes in the program, and provide learning opportunities.

- **Enhabit** [4], formerly Clean Energy Works Oregon, has been very successful in engaging contractors in regular, ongoing communication and making adjustments to the program in response to contractor feedback. For example, when Enhabit engaged a new financing partner, the program asked contractors to examine the loan product and approval process. Leadership of the **Home Performance Contractors Guild of Oregon** [5], an organization that provided a unified voice and formal role for program contractors, identified that the timing of loan signings came too late in the contractor sales process. The guild said the financing product would not be of much use to contractors because contractors would have to expend considerable effort in a project before knowing if their customer could get a loan to pay for it. As a result, Enhabit renegotiated with the financing partner to put the loan signing earlier in the sales process. For more information, see the case study **Making the Program Work for Contractors** [6].

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Links

[1] https://rpsc.energy.gov/handbooks/contractor-engagement-workforce-development-%E2%80%93-overview
[2] http://www.longislandgreenhomes.org/
[3] http://energy.gov/eere/better-buildings-neighborhood-program/rutland-county-vermont
[4] https://enhabit.org/
[5] http://www.oregonhpcg.org
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